اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer

Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah 78 - An-Naba (The News)

سُوْرَةُ النَّبَا مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

عَمَّ يَتَسَآءَلُوْنَ ﴿١﴾

(78:1) About what are they asking one another?

عَنِ النَّبَاِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٢﴾

(78:2) Is it about the awesome tiding

الَّذِيْ هُمْ فِيْهِ مُخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾

(78:3) that they are in utter disagreement? (1)

(1) The great news: the news of the Resurrection and Hereafter, which the people of Makkah heard with amazement, then raised questions and doubts about it in their assemblies. When they met each other they would ask: Did you ever hear that the dead will be resurrected to life? Is it credible that life will be infused once again into the bones which have decayed and become rotten? Does it stand to reason that the former and the latter generations will rise up and gather together at one place? Is it possible that these huge mountains which are so firmly set in the earth will fly about like flakes of wool? Can it so happen that the sun and the moon and the stars should be extinguished and the order and system of the world be overturned and upset? What has happened to him who was until yesterday a sane and wise man among us? Today he is giving us strange, impossible news. Where were this Hell and Heaven of which we had never heard from him before? Wherefrom have they appeared suddenly so that he has started depicting them so vividly before us?

Another meaning of fi-hi mukhtalifun also can be: As these people themselves have not agreed on any one view about

the end of the world, they hold varying views about it. Some one has been influenced by the Christian belief and believes in the life after death but thinks that the second life would not be a physical but only a spiritual life. Another does not deny the Hereafter absolutely but doubts whether it was possible or not. The Quran relates the view of these very people when it says: We do only guess: we are not certain. (Surah Al-Jathiyah, Ayat 32). And another plainly said: There is no other life than this present life, and we shall never be raised back to life after our death. (Surah 6. Al- Anam, Ayat 29). Then, there were some atheists, who said: Life is only this worldly life of ours. Here we shall die and live and nothing but the change of time destroys us. (Surah Al-Jathiyah, Ayat 24). There were some others who were not atheistic but they regarded the second life as impossible. According to them it was beyond the power of God to raise the dead back to life. They said: Who will give life to these bones when they are rotten. (Surah Yasin, Ayat 78). Their different views by themselves were a proof that they had no knowledge in this regard; they were only conjecturing and guessing. Had they any knowledge, they would have agreed on one view. (For further explanation, see E.N. 6 of Surah Adh-Dharuyat).

كَلَّا سَيَعۡلَمُونَ ۝٤

(78-4) No indeed; [2] soon will they come to know; [3]

(2) That is, whatever they say about the Hereafter is false, and all their concepts about it are wrong.

(3) That is, the time is not far off when the same thing about which they are expressing all sorts of meaningless doubts and misgivings, will appear before them as a reality. Then they will realize that what the Messenger (peace be upon him) had foretold was absolutely true and what they were saying on the basis of conjecture and speculation had no truth in it.

ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَيَعۡلَمُونَ ۝٥

(78:5) again, no indeed; soon will they come to know.

أَلَمۡ نَجۡعَلِ ٱلۡأَرۡضَ مِهَٰدٗا ۝٦

(78:6) Have We not spread the earth like a bed, [4]

(4) Enough light has been thrown at several places in the meaning of the Quran on the supreme wisdom and power of Allah that underlies His making the earth a carpet, i.e. an abode of perfect peace and rest. For explanation, see E.Ns 73, 74, 81 of Surah An-Naml; E.N. 29 of Surah Yaseen; E.Ns 90, 91 of Surah Al-Momin; E.N. 7 of Surah Az-Zukhruf; E.N. 7 of Surah Al-Jathiyah; E.N. 18 of Surah Qaaf.

وَٱلۡجِبَالَ أَوۡتَادٗا ۝٧

(78:7) and fixed the mountains like pegs, [5]

(5) For the wisdom of creating mountains on the earth, see E.N. 12 of Surah An-Nahl; E.N. 74 of Surah An-Naml; E.N. 15 of Surah Al-Mursalat.

وَخَلَقۡنَٰكُمۡ أَزۡوَاجٗا ۝٨

(78:8) and created you in pairs (as men and

women), [6]

(6) For explanation of the supreme wisdom that underlies the creation of men and women into pairs, see E.N. 69 of Surah Al-Furqan; E. Ns 28 to 30 of Surah Ar-Room, E.N. 31 of Surah Yaseen; E.N. 77 of Surah Ash-Shura; E N. 12 of Surah Az-Zukhruf; E.N. 25 of Surah Al-Qiyamah.

وَّ جَعَلۡ نَا نَوۡ مَكُمۡ سُبَاتًا ۙ﴿۹﴾

(78:9) and made your sleep a means of repose, [7]

(7) The explanation of the wisdom for which Allah Almighty has placed a desire for sleep in man's nature in order to make him fit for work in the world, and which impels him to a few hours' sleep after every few hours of work, has been given in E.N. 33 of Surah Ar-Rum.

وَّ جَعَلۡنَا الَّلَ لِبَاسًا ۙ١٠

(78:10) and made the night a covering,

وَّ جَعَلۡنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا ۙ١١

(78:11) and made the day to seek livelihood, (8)

(8) That is, the night has been made dark so that protected from light, you could enjoy a peaceful sleep more easily and made the day bright for the reason that you could work for your livelihood with greater ease and facility. Reference has been made to only one benefit out of countless benefits of the continuous alternation of night and day regularly on the earth to tell that all this is not happening without a purpose or accidentally, but there is supreme wisdom underlying it, which has a deep connection with your own immediate interests. The darkness that was needed for the peace and rest of your body in view of its structure has been provided in the night and the light that was needed for earning livelihood has been provided in the day. This arrangement that has been made precisely in accordance with your needs by itself testifies that it could not be possible without the wisdom of a Wise Being. (For further explanation, see E.N. 65 of Surah Younus; E.N. 32 of Surah Yasin; E.N. 85 of Surah Al-Momin; E.N. 4 of Surah Az- Zukhruf).

وَّ بَنَيۡنَا فَوۡقَكُمۡ سَبۡعًا شِدَادًا ۙ١٢

(78:12) and built above you seven strong firmaments, (9)

(9) Strong, in the sense that their boundaries are so strongly fortified that no change whatever occurs in them, nor does any of the countless stars and planets in the heavens, violating these boundaries, collide with the other, nor falls down to the earth. (For further explanation, see E.N. 34 of Surah Al-Baqarah; E.N. 2 of Surah Ar-Rad; E.Ns 8, 12 of Surah Al-Hijr; E.N. 15 of Surah Al-Muminun; E.N. 13 of Surah Luqman; E.N. 37 of Surah Yaseen; E.Ns 5, 6 of Surah As-Saffat; E.N. 90 of Surah Al-Momin; E.Ns 7, 8 of Surah Qaf).

وَّ جَعَ لۡنَا سِرَاجًا وَّهَّاجًا ﴿١٣﴾

(78:13) and placed therein a hot, shining lamp, (10)

(10) A bright, blazing lamp: the sun. The word wahhaj used for the sun means both intensely hot and intensely bright. Hence our rendering. In this brief sentence, allusion has been made to a most wonderful and glorious sign of Allah Almighty's power and wisdom which the sun is. Its diameter is 109 times that of the earth's and its size more than 333,000 times that of the earth's. Its temperature is 14,000,000°C. In spite of shining 93,000,000 miles away from the earth, its light and brightness is dazzling, and man can look at it with the naked eye only at the risk of losing his eye-sight. As for its heat, temperature in some parts of the earth reaches 140°F because of its radiation. It is only Allah Who by His wisdom has placed the earth at the right distance from it, neither it is too hot for being close to it, nor too cold for being very far away from it. For this very reason life of man, animal and vegetable became possible on it. Measureless treasures of energy from it are reaching the earth and sustaining life. It helps ripen our crops to provide sustenance to every creature; its heat causes vapors to rise from the seas, which spread to different parts of the earth by means of the winds and fall as rain. In the sun Allah has kindled such a mighty furnace that has been constantly radiating light, heat and different kinds of rays throughout the entire solar system since millions and millions of years.

وَّ اَ نۡزَ نۡنَا مِنَ ا لۡ مُعۡ صِرٰتِ مَآءً ثَجَّاجًا ﴿۱۴﴾

(78:14) and sent down abundant water from the clouds

لِّنُخۡرِجَ بِهٖ حَبًّا وَّ نَبَاتًا ﴿۱۵﴾

(78:15) so that We may thereby bring forth grain and vegetation,

وَّ جَنّٰتٍ اَلۡفَافًا ﴿۱۶﴾

(78:16) and gardens dense with foliage? (11)

(11) For the details of the wonderful manifestations of Allah Almighty's power and wisdom in making arrangements for the rain and the growth of vegetation thereby, see E.N. 53 (a) of Surah An-Nahl; E.N. 17 of Surah Al-Muminun; E.N. 5 of Surah Ash-Shuara; E.N. 35 of Surah Ar-Rum; E.N. 19 of Surah Fatir; E.N. 29 of Surah Yaseen; E.N. 20 of Al- Momin; E.Ns 10, 11 of Surah Az-Zukhruf; E.Ns 28 to 30 of Surah Al-Waqiah.

After presenting a number of the signs and testimonies, one after the other, in these verses, the deniers of the Resurrection and Hereafter have been exhorted, so as to say: If you consider the earth and the mountains and your own creation, your sleep and wakefulness, and the system of the day and night intelligently, and consider the well-fortified system of the universe and the shining sun in the heavens, the rain falling from the clouds and the vegetables growing thereby, you will see two things very clearly: first, that all this could neither come into existence without a mighty power, nor continue to exist and function so regularly; second, that in each of these great wisdom is working and nothing that happens here is purposeless. Now, only a foolish person could say that the Being Who by His power has brought these things into existence, does not have the power to destroy them and create them once again in some other form, and this also could be said only by an unreasonable person that the Wise Being Who has not done anything without purpose in this universe, has given to man in His world understanding and intelligence, discrimination between good and evil, freedom to

obey or disobey, and powers of appropriation over countless of His creatures, without any purpose and design: whether man uses and employs the things granted by Him in the right way or the wrong way, it does not make any difference; whether man continues to do good throughout life till death, he will end up in the dust, or continues to do evil till death, he will likewise end up in the dust. Neither the virtuous man will receive any reward for the good deeds nor the bad man will be held accountable for his evil deeds. These very arguments for life after death and Resurrection and Hereafter have been given here and there in the Quran, e.g. see E.N. 7 of Surah Ar-Rad; E.N. 9 of Surah Al-Hajj; E.N. 6 of Surah Ar-Rum; E.Ns 10, 12 of Surah Saba; E.Ns 8, 9 of Surah As-Saffat.

اِنَّ يَوۡمَ الۡفَصۡلِ كَانَ مِيۡقَاتًا ۙ ﴿۱۷﴾

(78:17) Surely the Day of Judgement has an appointed time;

يَّوۡمَ يُنۡفَخُ فِى الصُّوۡرِ فَتَاۡتُوۡنَ اَفۡوَاجًا ۙ ﴿۱۸﴾

(78:18) the Day when the Trumpet shall be blown, and you will come forth in multitudes; (12)

(12) This implies the final sounding of the Trumpet at which all dead men will rise back to life forthwith. You implies not only those who were the addressees at that time but all those humans who will have been born from the beginning of creation till Resurrection. (For explanation, see E.N. 57 of Surah Ibrahim; E.N. 1 of Surah Al-Hajj; E.Ns 46, 47 of Surah Yaseen; E.N. 79 of Surah Az-Zumar).

وَّفُتِحَتِ السَّمَآءُ فَكَانَتۡ اَبۡوَابًا ۙ ﴿۱۹﴾

(78:19) and when the sky shall be opened up and will become all doors;

وَّسُيِّرَتِ الۡجِبَالُ فَكَانَتۡ سَرَابًا ؕ ﴿۲۰﴾

(78:20) and the mountains will be set in motion and become a mirage. (13)

(13) One should bear in mind the fact that here also, as at many other places in the Quran, the different states of Resurrection have been mentioned all together. In the first verse, mention has been made of what will happen at the final sounding of the Trumpet and in the following two verses of the state which will appear at the second sounding of the Trumpet. This we have already explained in E.N. 10 of Surah Al-Haqqah above. The heavens shall be opened means: All obstacles in the heavens will be removed and every heavenly calamity from every side will befall freely as though all doors for it were open and no door had remained closed to obstruct its happening. The mountains will be set in motion till they become as a mirage means: In no time will the mountains be uprooted from their places and then will be scattered away in particles leaving nothing but vast, empty sand plains behind. This same state has been described in Surah Ta Ha, thus: They ask you, well, where will the mountains go on that Day? Say to them: My Lord will reduce them to fine dust and scatter it away. He will turn the earth into an empty level plain, wherein you will neither see any curve nor crease. (verses 105-107 and the corresponding E. N . 83).

اِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتۡ مِرۡصَادًا ۙ﴿۲۱﴾

(78:21) Surely the Hell is an ambush, (14)

(14) An ambush: a place contrived to entrap game by surprise. Hell has been described as an ambush, because the rebels of God are fearless of it and are enjoying life thinking that the world is a haven of bliss for them. They do not know that Hell is lying in ambush for them, which will trap them suddenly and keep them trapped.

لِّلطَّاغِيۡنَ مَاٰبًا ۙ﴿۲۲﴾

(78:22) a resort for the rebellious;

لّٰبِثِيۡنَ فِيۡهَاۤ اَحۡقَابًا ۚ﴿۲۳﴾

(78:23) therein they shall abide for ages, (15)

(15) The word ahqab as used in the original means successive periods of long time appearing continuously one after the other. From this word some people have tried to argue that there will be eternity in the life of Paradise but no eternity in the life of Hell. For however long these ages may be, they will not be endless but will come to an end at some time. But this argument is wrong for two reasons. First, that lexically, the word haqab (sing. of ahqab) itself contains the meaning that one haqab should be closely followed by another haqab; therefore, ahqab will necessarily be used only for such periods of time as continue to appear successively one after the other and there should be no period which is not followed by another period. Second, that as a rule it is wrong to put a meaning on a verse of the Quran pertaining to a particular theme which clashes with other statements of the Quran pertaining to the same theme. At 34 places in the Quran the word khulud (eternity) has been used concerning the dwellers of Hell. At three places not only the word khulud has been used but the word abadan (for ever and ever) also has been added to it; and at one place it has been clearly stated: They will wish to get out of Hell but shall not be able to

come out of it and theirs shall be an everlasting torment. (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 37). At another place it has been said: Therein they shall abide forever, as long as the earth and the heavens shall last, unless your Lord ordains otherwise. And the same thing has been said about the dwellers of Paradise too: They shall dwell in Paradise forever, as long as the earth and the heavens shall last, unless your Lord wills something else. (Houd, Ayats 107- 108). After these explanations, how can one argue, on the basis of the word ahqab, that the stay of the rebels of God in Hell will not be eternal, but it will come to an end at some stage in time?

لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا بَرۡدًا وَّلَا شَرَابًا ۲۴

(78:24) they shall taste in it no coolness, nor any pleasant drink

اِلَّا حَمِيۡمًا وَّغَسَّاقًا ۲۵

(78:25) save boiling water and wash of the wounds; (16)

(16) The word ghassaq as used in the original applies to pus, blood, pus-blood and all those fluids that flow out from the eyes and skins as a result of a grievous penalty. Besides, this word is also used for a thing which stinks and gives out horrid, offensive smell.

جَزَآءً وِّفَاقًا ؕ ﴿٢٦﴾

(78:26) a befitting recompense for their deeds.

اِنَّهُمۡ كَانُوۡا لَا يَرۡجُوۡنَ حِسَابًا ۙ ﴿٢٧﴾

(78:27) For indeed they did not look forward to any reckoning,

وَّكَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا كِذَّابًا ؕ ﴿٢٨﴾

(78:28) and roundly denied Our Signs as false. (17)

(17) This is the reason for which they will deserve this dreadful penalty of Hell. Firstly, they lived in the world thinking that the time will never come when they will have to appear before God and render an account of their deeds; second, that they utterly refused to accept and acknowledge the revelations that Allah had sent through His Prophets for their instruction and treated them as falsehood.

وَكُلَّ شَىۡءٍ اَحۡصَيۡنٰهُ كِتٰبًا ﴿٢٩﴾

(78:29) And everything have We recorded in a Book. (18)

(18) That is, We were continuously preparing a complete record of their sayings and doings, their movements and occupations, even of their intentions, thoughts and aims in life and nothing was being left un-recorded, whereas the foolish people in their heedlessness thought that they were living in a lawless kingdom where they were free to do whatever they pleased and desired, and there was no power to call them to account.

فَذُوۡقُوۡا فَلَنۡ نَّزِيۡدَكُمۡ اِلَّا عَذَابًا ۩ ﴿٣٠﴾

(78:30) So taste (the fruit of your deeds). We shall only increase your torment.

اِنَّ لِلۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ مَفَازًا ۳۱

(78:31) Surely the state of triumph awaits the God-fearing: (19)

(19) Here, the word righteous has been used in contrast to those who did not expect any accountability and who had belied Allah's revelations. Therefore, this word inevitably implies those people who believed in Allah's revelations and lived in the world with the understanding that they had to render an account of their deeds ultimately.

حَدَآئِقَ وَ اَعۡنَابًا ۳۲

(78:32) gardens and vineyards,

وَّكَوَاعِبَ اَتۡرَابًا ۳۳

(78:33) and youthful maidens of like age, (20)

(20) This may mean that they will be of equal age among themselves as well as that they will be of equal age with their husbands. This same theme has already occurred in Surah Sad, Ayat 52 and Surah Al-Waqiah, Ayat 37.

وَّ كَاۡسًا دِهَاقًا ۳۴

(78:34) and an overflowing cup.

لَا يَسۡمَعُوۡنَ فِيۡهَا لَغۡوًا وَّ لَا كِذّٰبًا ۳۵

(78:35) Therein they shall hear no idle talk, nor any falsehood; (21)

(21) At several places in the Quran this has been counted as among the major blessings of Paradise. Human ears there will remain secure against idle, false and indecent talk. There will be no nonsensical, meaningless gossiping in Paradise; no one will tell lies nor belie others; nor will there be any use of abusive language, slandering; calumnies and false accusations which are

so common in the world. (For further explanations, see E.N. 28 of Surah Maryam, E.Ns 13, 14 of Surah Al-Waqiah).

جَزَآءً مِّن رَّبِّكَ عَطَآءً حِسَابًا ﴿٣٦﴾

(78:36) a recompense from your Lord and an ample reward (22)

(22) A reward and generous gift: that is, they will not only be given their due rewards which they will deserve for their good deeds, but over and above these they will be given additional and generous gifts and prizes as well. Contrary to this, in respect of the dwellers of Hell it has been said: They will be recompensed fully for their misdeeds. That is, they will neither be punished less than what they will deserve for their crimes nor more. This theme has been explained at length at many places in the Quran, for example, see Surah Younus, Ayats 26-27; Surah An-Naml, Ayats 89-90; Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 84; Surah Saba, Ayats 33-38; Surah Al-Momin, Ayat 40.

رَّبِّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَا بَيۡنَهُمَا الرَّحۡمٰنِ لَا يَمۡلِكُوۡنَ مِنۡهُ خِطَابًا ﴿٣٧﴾

(78:37) from the Lord of the heavens and the earth and of that which is between them; the Most Merciful Lord before Whom none dare utter a word. (23)

(23) That is, the court of Allah Almighty will be so awe-inspiring that no one, whether belonging to the earth or to the heavens, will dare open his mouth of his own will before Allah, nor interfere in the court's work and proceedings.

يَوۡمَ يَقُوۡمُ الرُّوۡحُ وَ الۡمَلٰٓئِكَةُ صَفًّا ؕ لَّا يَتَكَلَّمُوۡنَ اِلَّا مَنۡ اَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحۡمٰنُ وَ قَالَ صَوَابًا ﴿٣٨﴾

(78:38) The Day when the Spirit (24) and the angels are ranged row on row. None shall speak save he whom the Merciful Lord will permit; and he too will speak what is right. (25)

(24) According to most commentators, the Spirit implies the Angel Gabriel, who has been mentioned separately from the

angels because of his high rank and position with Allah. (For further explanation, see E.N. 3 of Surah Al-Maarij).

(25) To speak: to intercede, and intercession has been made conditional upon two things: (1) That the person who is granted permission by Allah to intercede for a sinner will alone be allowed to intercede and for the particular sinner only. (2) That the intercessor will say only what is right and proper, and nothing derogatory, and the one for whom he is interceding should have at least acknowledged the truth in the world. That is, he should only be a sinner, not an unbeliever. (For further explanation, see E.N. 281 of Surah Al-Baqarah; E.N. 5 of Surah Younus; E.N. 106 of Surah Hud; E.N. 52 of Surah Maryam; E.Ns 85, 86 of Surah Ta Ha; E.N. 27 of Surah Al-Anbiya; E.Ns 40, 41 of Surah Saba; E.N. 32 of Surah Al-Momin; E.N 63 of Surah Az- Zukhruf; E N. 21 of Surah An-Najm; E.N. 36 of Surah Al- Mudathir).

ذٰلِكَ الۡيَوۡمُ الۡحَقُّ ۚ فَمَنۡ شَآءَ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ مَاٰبًا ﴿۳۹﴾

(78:39) That Day is sure to come. So let him who will seek a resort with his Lord.

اِنَّاۤ اَنۡذَرۡنٰكُمۡ عَذَابًا قَرِيۡبًا ۖ يَّوۡمَ يَنۡظُرُ الۡمَرۡءُ مَا قَدَّمَتۡ يَدٰهُ وَيَقُوۡلُ الۡكٰفِرُ يٰلَيۡتَنِىۡ كُنۡتُ تُرٰبًا ﴿۴۰﴾

(78:40) Lo! We warn you of a chastisement near at hand; (26) the Day when a man will look on what his own hands have sent forth, and the unbelievers shall say: “Oh would that I were utter dust.” (27)

(26) Apparently, one might think that the people who were the audience of this verse died fourteen centuries ago, and even now it cannot be said how many hundreds or thousands or millions of years Resurrection will take to come. Then, in what sense has it been said: The torment of which you have been warned, has approached near at hand? And what is the meaning of saying in the beginning of the Surah: Soon they shall know? The answer is that man can have the feeling of time only until he is passing a physical life in the world within the bounds of space and time. After death when only the soul will survive, he will lose

every feeling and consciousness of time, and on the Day of Resurrection when man will rise back to life, he will feel as though some one had aroused him from sleep suddenly. He will not at all be conscious that he has been resurrected after thousands of years. (For further explanation, see E.N. 26 of Surah An-Nahl; E.N. 56 of Surah Bani Israil; E.N. 80 of Surah Ta Ha; E.N. 48 of Surah Yaseen).

(27) Would that I were mere dust: "Would that I had not been born in the world, or had become mere dust after death, and thus reduced to nothingness.